

STATE OF WASHINGTON
PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR
STANDARDS BOARD

June 19, 2003

Bobbie May
President
Washington State Board of Education
Old Capitol Building, Rm. 253
P. O. Box 47260
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Bobbie:

The Professional Educator Standards Board is pleased to submit the enclosed recommendations based on our study of the implementation of the professional certificate which the State Board requested we conduct. The shift to a new system of performance-based preparation and certification established by the State Board is not an easy one and implementation is naturally accompanied by great difficulties in terms of changes in practice. Overall, we commend the tremendous efforts that are taking place in higher education teacher preparation programs and school districts across the state to implement this new requirement. We also recognize and are appreciative of the efforts of the professional education and certification division of OSPI for the increased burden this new requirement has placed on their staff.

Many who are well-along in their implementation of the professional certificate praise its benefits on teachers' professional growth, and more importantly, student learning. Like any new requirement, however, early implementation reveals areas in need of change and improvement. This is made all the more difficult by the extreme fiscal constraints currently imposed on our education system. We believe the enclosed recommendations are for practical, feasible changes and improvements that will support the successful implementation of the professional certificate statewide.

Thank you for your request that we conduct this study, your support during its duration, and your consideration of these findings and recommendations. We will continue to monitor implementation of the professional certificate and forward further findings and recommendations as warranted.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Bradley, Chair
Professional Educator Standards Board

March 2003

Recommendation to State Board of Education from the Professional Educator Standards Board re: changes to current requirement of completion of provisional status prior to beginning “core” of professional certificate program

Current Law:

WAC 180-78A-505 Overview -- Teacher professional certificate program. By September 1, 2001, all colleges and universities offering a professional certificate program must be in compliance with the new program standards. To obtain a professional certificate, the residency teacher will need to complete a state board of education approved professional certificate program collaboratively developed by a college/university and the professional educational advisory board (PEAB). ***The candidate shall complete provisional status, with a school district under RCW 28A.405.220 or the equivalent with an approved private school or state agency providing educational services for students, prior to admission to a professional certificate program, excluding the preassessment seminar.***

PESB Professional Certificate Study Committee Findings:

Through information and testimony gathered by the Professional Educator Standards Board and its Professional Certificate Study Committee, we have been presented with numerous examples of individuals and entities for whom the current requirement places unnecessary restrictions, such as:

- Candidates with multiple years of teaching experience, yet who have not achieved provisional employment status;
- Mature professionals transitioning into teaching who are deemed by both their districts and higher education preparation programs to be ready to begin the “core” of a professional certificate program;
- Districts that have developed a seamless professional development and support system from residency certification through TAP to professional certification who desire their provisional status teachers to begin their core;
- Higher education teacher preparation programs partnering with these candidates and districts.

Furthermore the current requirement is already causing both candidates and programs to creatively rule-bend in order to acknowledge and credit the pre-provisional work of candidates as part of their “core”.

At the same time, we are cognizant that the first year of teaching can be overwhelming, and many, if not most, new teachers are not ready to begin a professional certificate program. While some districts have excellent systems for supporting provisional status teachers in beginning a professional certificate program, many do not and beginning teachers, in particular, need that district support. In addition, the professional certificate, as a second-tier certificate, was designed as a context-based, reflective, professional growth experience for *experienced* educators.

Still, the current requirement is designed as a “one size fits all” approach, and we believe individual candidates, together with their employing districts and the approved preparation programs, are best positioned to make professional judgments about when a candidate may begin their professional certificate program.

PESB Recommendation:

We recommend that the State Board amend current WAC as follows:

WAC 180-78A-505 Overview -- Teacher professional certificate program. (1) By September 1, 2001, all colleges and universities offering a professional certificate program must be in compliance with the new program standards.

(2) To obtain a professional certificate, the residency teacher will need to complete a state board of education approved professional certificate program collaboratively developed by a college/university and the professional educational advisory board (PEAB).

(3)(a) ~~((7))~~ Prior to full admission to a professional certificate program, excluding the preassessment seminar, the candidate shall complete provisional status((;)) with a school district under RCW 28A.405.220, or the equivalent with an approved private school or state agency providing educational services for students((, prior to admission to a professional certificate program, excluding the preassessment seminar)).

(b) The candidate may be fully admitted to the professional certificate program, prior to completion of provisional status, if the candidate provides to the program a letter from the candidate's employing school district, private school, or state agency providing educational services for students, documenting the employer's support for the candidate's full admission to the professional certificate program.

In addition to addressing the issues in the “findings” section above, we believe this change in WAC will also address the following:

- Many districts invest significant time and resources in their professional certificate candidates, and some do not want to make that investment in teachers who have not completed provisional status, who they may not continue to employ, to begin their core in that district.
- A “letter documenting support” need not be a different letter for every candidate, so this need not be burdensome for districts. A district could have one letter that states their support of candidates and perhaps describes their program, and they could provide that same letter for any/every candidate; either by selectively screening those who they allow to begin “core” or just establishing blanket policy that leaves discretion to the individuals and higher education institutions.
- The professional certificate process is intended to operate as a partnership between the candidate, the district and the higher education preparation program. One of the challenges we are facing in implementing the professional certificate is lack of awareness and action by districts regarding this new requirement. By requiring demonstration of district support for provisionally-employed candidates, we are hopeful that this may, in some cases, prompt greater awareness and action.

June, 2003

**Report to State Board of Education:
Status of Implementation of the Professional Teaching Certificate**

Background

As of September 1, 2000, all teachers who receive a residency certificate will also be expected within five years, but required within ten years, to earn a second-level teaching certificate, the professional certificate. The professional certificate is performance-based, requiring teachers to produce classroom-based evidence that they have met the standards for the certificate. This differs significantly from the previous certificate, the continuing certificate, which was awarded based on accumulated course credits. Both school districts and higher education preparation programs play a significant role in teachers attaining the professional certificate. Each candidate has a “professional growth team” that includes a colleague, district representative, and college/university advisor. The purpose of the team is to provide guidance to the teacher in developing a “professional growth plan” that defines the substance of the candidate’s professional certificate program, in the context of school and district improvement goals. A professional certificate program involves a “pre-assessment seminar” and a “culminating seminar” offered through a higher education program; but the “core” of the professional certificate program can involve a variety of professional development experiences.

The State Board of Education requested that the PESB conduct a study of the status of implementation of the professional certificate and make recommendations on any needed improvements. Over the course of nine months, the PESB gathered information from higher education institutions, school districts, teachers and others directly impacted by this new requirement. In addition, formal panel discussions were held at three separate PESB meetings. As a result of the information gathered and discussions held, the PESB has developed a set of findings and recommendations for improvements at this stage of implementation. The PESB will continue to monitor the implementation of the professional certificate and develop further recommendations as appropriate.

In course of our study, the issues raised most frequently can be organized into the following major categories:

- Communications/Coordination Regarding Professional Certification Requirements and Programs
- District and Program Capacity to Offer the Program and Provide Candidate Access
- System Alignment
- Funding Support
- Burden and Fairness

We have organized our findings and recommendations by these categories.

Summary of Findings / Recommendations

Communications / Coordination Regarding Professional Certification Requirements and Programs

The PESB sees this issue as the major challenge facing implementation of the professional certificate, not uncommon to all new major programs, laws, and initiatives. It takes time and effort to build understanding about new requirements and responsibilities, and assistance to make them work. There is a critical, short-term need for an increase in 1) clear, consistent, accurate information communicated to candidates; and 2) district and program guidance and sharing of exemplary models.

Findings/Recommendations:

1. The Professional Education and Certification division of OSPI (PEC) should request that districts identify an individual at the district, or in the case of smaller districts this individual could be a designate at the ESD, to serve as the primary contact for information on the professional certificate. Similarly, PEC should designate an individual staff member to be the prime contact, who would serve as coordinator for this network of district/ESD contacts. Together with the contacts already identified at higher education institutions, this network could serve as the focal point for increased efforts to exchange informational materials and guidance on Pro Cert. For example, periodic updates related to the professional certificate, such as the new common rubrics or change in requirement of completion of provisional status could be emailed from PEC to the district and higher ed contacts, and districts could email each other with information with guidance on various aspects of implementation. Identifying a district/ESD contact would also assist PEC in referring callers to their appropriate district contact, since district context is such a crucial component of the professional certificate process.
2. Districts that are just getting underway in addressing this new requirement often have limitations in terms of capacity, and they need information on what to expect in term of time and commitment of resources on the part of the district representative and other members of professional growth teams. Professional Education and Certification should gather sample/model “job descriptions” and/or lists of responsibilities for these roles, based on legal requirements as well as exemplary models emerging from district programs. This will assist districts and their ESDs in planning and training.
3. State Board of Education, Professional Education and Certification, and PESB need to work with various education organizations to step up collaborative efforts to communicate accurately to candidates and districts about the professional certificate process and requirements. We acknowledge that PEC has made great efforts to communicate about the new requirements through meetings, conferences, K-20, OSPI’s web site, and other means. A good foundation of information about the basic requirements is available and accessible. But new materials are being developed on an ongoing basis, and some changes in requirements have occurred. As new materials and guidance are developed, and more complex questions and misunderstandings arise, ensuring accurate, easily accessible information will be crucial. New and existing communications vehicles, such as brochures, Q&As that dispel misunderstandings, association publications, strategic listservs (such as TAP mentors) increased presence at conferences, should be considered. Current documents

4. on OSPI website are helpful, but not easily accessible given their placement within the OSPI site. The OSPI home page should include an easily-identifiable icon link to certification information.
5. The State Board of Education needs to ensure that candidates are emerging from residency certification programs with a draft professional growth plan and solid understanding of the professional certification process and requirements. Site visits and first-year teacher surveys indicate that this is often not the case. We recommend that the State Board amend current WAC to require that completion of approved program for residency certification include a draft professional growth plan and a statement signed by all candidates that they are fully aware of the requirements for their continued certification and professional growth in the state of Washington.
5. As implementation of the professional certificate progresses, the questions and information needs are becoming more complex. One of the biggest needs we have heard expressed by districts is the need for greater guidance and concrete examples of what evidence of meeting the standards for professional certificate actually looks like. We are pleased that the PEC is working with approved programs and districts in making available and accessible “anchor papers” and other evidences that demonstrate acceptable and exemplary candidate work for the common rubrics and performance standards.

District and Program Capacity to Offer / Candidate Access

It's not yet clear how higher education preparation programs and school districts will be able to meet the level of demand in the timeline required.

Findings/Recommendations:

1. The PESB's professional certificate study committee had the opportunity to participate in a demonstration of ESD 113's online educator folio that can be adapted to any institution's professional certificate program. We were impressed and encouraged by this model in terms of technical feasibility, affordability, and the access it will allow candidates. The State Board should encourage all professional certificate programs to explore the relevance of this model for their program and candidates.
2. In addition to model “job descriptions” and other information about the roles of professional growth team members, consideration might be given to provision of guidelines for training in these roles and/or the possibilities of the state-level mentor training academy or districts' own mentor training academy might have a “track” that includes training to serve in these roles.
3. The State Board should request that the PESB, together with PEC, examine data to determine the current capacity and reach of higher education professional certification programs compared with projected numbers and location of candidates and programs statewide over the next decade.

System Alignment

The professional certificate process should fit seamlessly with the rest of the continuum of educator preparation and development. Some are concerned that alignment is inhibited by at least two factors: 1) current requirement that candidates cannot begin “core” of professional certificate program until they have completed provisional employment status; and 2) need for greater alignment between professional certificate standards and residency principal standards. For some candidates, this creates an unnecessary and harmful “gap” in their development continuum.

Findings/Recommendations:

1. Attached are the recommendations submitted to the State Board in March on the critical issue of amending the current requirement of completion of provisional status before beginning the “core” of a professional certificate program. We appreciate the State Board’s positive response to our recommendation and subsequent emergency rule adoption at their May meeting.
2. Through the program approval and site visit process, the State Board should ensure that professional certificate programs and principal preparation programs have articulated common expectations across these programs clearly for candidates such that, where appropriate, the “core” of the professional certificate program can also work toward fulfilling the requirements for principal preparation.

Funding Support for Implementation

Many are concerned that given the investment of time and resources on the part of higher education, school districts, and candidates, the professional certificate has been largely an unfunded mandate. The PESB believes it highly unlikely that funds from the state to support implementation of the professional certificate are forthcoming. At the same time, a strong message has been received from the colleges of education and school districts well underway in implementing that progress should not be halted.

Findings/Recommendations:

1. The State Board, PESB and PEC should work together to gather and disseminate information about exemplary programs in terms of the investments they’ve made and how they have made the Professional Certificate work. This should focus in particular on creative and appropriate use of various funding sources, such as I-728, ESEA and Title funds.

Burden and Fairness

The professional certificate represents a significant shift in practice, and as such has the potential for some unintended consequences for and impacts on teachers. The PESB is concerned in particular about: 1) the growing misalignment between our new system of teacher development and a salary allocation model still based on credits and clock hours; 2) teachers not to fully engaging in the professional growth plan process for fear that honest self-evaluation will result in negative evaluation by school principals; and 3) the requirements for the professional certificate and lack of reciprocity serving as a disincentive for out-of-state teachers to come to Washington.

Recommendations:

1. Develop means for recognizing attainment of professional certificate on the salary schedule in the context of continued work and study on a new compensation system that recognizes levels of teacher development, not accrued clock hours and credits. Likewise, teacher colleagues and other members of professional growth teams should be able to include service in this role as part of certificate renewal, either through award of clock hours or as part of an approved professional growth plan.
2. The PESB supports the notion of a complimentary and supportive relationship between systems of evaluation and professional growth. Yet the PESB heard concerns from teachers accustomed to more of a “firewall” between evaluation and professional development and fear that self-identification of areas in need of improvement would be used against them negatively by their school principal during their evaluation. The involvement of the professional growth team in reaching consensus on the focus of the teacher’s professional growth plan should actually serve as a guard against individual bias. Still, we recognize that abuses of the process are possible and emphasize the need for all parties to be aware of due process and appeals procedures available to candidates and required at both the higher education institution and school district.
3. So as not to discourage highly-qualified out-of-state teachers from pursuing teaching in Washington, the PESB believes that the SBE must ensure adequate and well-communicated means for out-of-state teachers with five or more years experience to be able to demonstrate competency against professional certificate standards, in some cases without additional requirements. This should include higher education programs providing on-line access to the pre-assessment process, through which they can submit evidence of competency to be evaluated. The State Board should ensure reasonable uniformity in the means by which institutions assess these competencies and monitor cross-institutional differences in professional certificate program requirements for out-of-state candidates. New methods, such as a panel review by representatives from multiple institutions, or other models, should be explored and considered.